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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

30 April 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHAIRMAN, PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN  
INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY BOARD

SUBJECT: Early Warning in National Intelligence

Attached for your information and review is a copy of my memorandum to the President commenting on your recommendations of January 11 regarding provision to the policy maker of timely intelligence on developing cold war crisis situations. I have detailed for you in a separate memorandum my observations with respect to the Berlin Wall and Syrian Coup incidents and certain matters relevant thereto.

  
JOHN A. McCONE  
Director

Attachment

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## MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Early Warning in National Intelligence

1. In response to a memorandum from Mr. McGeorge Bundy of 22 January 1962, I have reviewed the recommendations of the Killian Board in connection with its examination of the Berlin Wall and the Syrian Coup incidents. The members of the United States Intelligence Board have assisted me in this review.
2. I have responded in a separate memorandum (copy attached) to the Advisory Board's discussion of the Berlin Wall and Syrian Coup incidents. In this letter, I am confining my remarks, in line with Mr. Bundy's suggestion, to the four recommendations of the Advisory Board.
3. While intelligence cannot be expected to predict every important event in a highly volatile world, there is of course always room for improvement in the warning capabilities of national intelligence and in procedures for the timely appraisal and dissemination of national intelligence judgments on certain cold war crisis situations.
4. I believe that this can be done without establishing a new warning organization through the existing types of national intelligence issuances in the cold war area, i. e., the Central Intelligence Bulletin; the body of National Intelligence Estimates (both NIEs and SNIEs) continually being produced; and the Weekly Survey of Cold War Crisis Situations.

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5. The latter functions in a grey area between the immediate capabilities of current intelligence and the longer-range judgments of national estimates. Measures have been taken to clarify the terms of reference of the Survey, and to insure that it receives more intensive attention of the intelligence community both in Washington and the field. A wider range of crisis potentialities will be considered in the process of producing it, by way of improving warning coverage on the spectrum between current intelligence and national estimates. It will, however, retain principles of brevity and selectivity. I would caution that one of the disciplines our community must impose on itself is the careful evaluation and screening of the flood of reports received on possible crisis situations. I believe it preferable to accept the occasional risk of surprise, rather than disseminate many unjustified alarms as insurance against charges of failure.

6. With specific reference to Recommendation No. 1 (that a sense of urgency be imparted to the intelligence agencies), I believe that there is already a high sense of urgency in the intelligence community, both in Washington and the field. I believe that measures noted herein will contribute to maintaining this sense of urgency, and I shall periodically review the problem to assure myself that our sensitivity is kept at a high pitch.

7. I believe that Recommendation No. 2 (for periodic appraisals by field officials of crisis potentialities) has merit. I plan to discuss with the Secretary of State measures for carrying this out,

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8. With respect to Recommendation No. 3 (that procedures of the Intelligence Board and its subordinate bodies be modified to insure expression of significant dissents), I should point out that the right to a published dissent has been customary in these bodies. Upon assuming chairmanship of the USIB, I reiterated the importance I attach to the use of footnotes to present divergent views and my desire that estimates not be watered down to get everyone aboard. The members of the USIB unanimously concurred in this. I emphasize that intellectual discipline

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and restraint are important in the expression of dissent, lest the finished product be merely a collection of conflicting opinions rather than a responsible judgment, but I am satisfied that present usages are now adequate.

9. With reference to Recommendation No. 4 (that CIA spot reports be made available) this is only part of the larger problem of assuring adequate dissemination of intelligence. While I think existing arrangements for reporting foreign intelligence to the President and to the members of his staff are now sufficiently comprehensive and flexible to permit adequate reporting of crises situations, I look forward to discussions with appropriate White House officials regarding possible improvement in our service to the President and the National Security Council.

(Signed)

JOHN A. McCONE  
Director

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